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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's efforts to oust President Chen Shui-bian and investigations into the Presidential Office's special state affairs expense account stayed in the Taiwan media's spotlight today. News coverage also focused on a scandal allegedly involving the director-general of the Civil Aeronautics Administration, and on Taiwan's reaction to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine Tuesday.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, compared the tightened security checks at U.S. airports to the calls by some Taiwan businesses to open the three links across the Taiwan Strait, saying that Taiwan's pro-China politicians should be ashamed for failing to safeguard Taiwan's national security. An opinion piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" criticized former AIT Director Douglas Paal's recent speech at the Brookings Institution, saying he has forgotten China's real motives. End Summary.

A) "Look at Contention over Three Links in Our Nation from Security Checks at U.S. Airports"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (8/16):

"... It is true that time is money, but money cannot buy a nation's security or lives. How can one live as a free man when one's country loses its sovereignty? American people and American businesses are clearly aware of this logic. But look at Taiwan: China arbitrarily passed the 'Taiwan Invasion Authorization Act' (namely, the 'Anti-Secession Law') on March 14, 2005, but it's a shame that pan-Blue people have been vying to visit China, and the DPP government has also maintained a continuously relaxed policy toward cross-Strait relations. Not only that, but the government also hosted the second Economic Development Advisory Conference in the hope of significantly easing the island's restrictions on investment in, and 'financial aid' to China. The name of the conference was changed to the 'Conference on Sustaining Taiwan's Economic Development' afterwards. But one would feel ashamed if he recalled the scenes in which Taiwan businessmen, for the sake of their personal interests, urged the government to start quick, direct cross-Strait transportation, and then looked at the American people, who were willing to queue for one or two hours for security checks [at airports] just for the needs of their national security. We want to show our respect to the U.S. Government for its responsible attitude towards safeguarding the nation, but we also feel ashamed for some Taiwan businessmen and pro-China politicians. In short, what Taiwan really needs now is a Taiwan-centered national consciousness. But what has the government done in this aspect over the past six years? Yet it is still not too late to take precautions. We hope the DPP, which upholds nativism, will take

this opportunity to learn from the United States, reflect on itself and correct its previous mistakes."

B) "Paal Has Forgotten China's Real Motives"

Winston Dang, a DPP legislator and director of the DPP's Department of International Affairs, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/16):

"In his speech at the Brookings Institution on July 13, titled 'Some Reflections on My Time in Taiwan,' former American Institute in Taiwan director Douglas Paal said that China's intent to restrain Taiwan lay behind its rapid military buildup. ... Paal seems to feel that the policies of the US and China regarding Taiwan, although articulated differently, are essentially the same in terms of maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait. ... With deep regret, I must conclude that Paal's assessment of cross-strait circumstances is far removed from reality. Taiwan is constantly under the threat of invasion by China because of its pursuit of peace and democracy and its attempts to establish itself in the international arena. China has never renounced its ambition to attack Taiwan. This was the reality for decades before Lee's Cornell visit. Beijing's goal is to become a hegemonic power, supplanting the US in East Asia. ...

"I disagree with Paal's mentioning the democratic US and the dictatorial China together against a background of military expansion and understanding of peace and democracy. ... I also disagree with Paal's understanding that Taiwan's long-time wish to ink a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US as soon as possible stems from political consideration alone. ... Taiwan's democratic achievements and economic prosperity are built on universal values. Don't let China's saber rattling wipe out all the hard work the Taiwanese people have invested in their democracy and freedom."

YOUNG